



GREAT  
RIVERS



HIRING A  
COMMUNITY  
HEALTH  
WORKER

# A GUIDE TO HELP YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION



GREAT RIVERS HUB / A PROGRAM OF GREAT RIVERS UNITED WAY  
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## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER?



## ROLE OF A CHW

A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW) IS A FRONT LINE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKER WHO IS A TRUSTED MEMBER OF, AND/OR HAS AN UNUSUALLY CLOSE UNDERSTANDING OF, THE COMMUNITY SERVED.

This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A Community Health Worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

-American Public Health Association

- Advocate for vulnerable populations and communities
- Centralized contact person for individuals to navigate social service and health systems within the community
- Help community members get appropriate screenings
- Make appropriate referrals for health and social needs
- Track an individual's progress towards meeting health goals
- Educate individuals on health habits such as: how to prepare healthy meals, get more physically active, and stop smoking
- Cultural mediation among individuals, communities, and health and social service systems
- Providing culturally-appropriate health education and information
- Community care coordination
- Coaching & social support
- Build individual and community capacity
- Conduct individual needs assessments
- Outreach
- Participate in evaluation and research



## QUALITIES OF A CHW

- **Lived experience:** the knowledge to navigate systems in the community because they have had the opportunity to navigate them before
- **Connected to the community:** a community member OR having a close understanding of the community that they serve with shared life experiences
- **Interpersonal warmth:** the ability to listen and respond to clients and communities with compassion and kindness
- **Trustworthiness & maturity:** allowing others to confide in you, maintaining confidentiality, and upholding professional ethics
- **Objectivity:** striving to work with and view clients and their circumstances without the influence of personal prejudice or bias
- **Self-awareness & understanding:** being able to reflect upon your own experience, biases, and prejudices to ensure that they do not negatively affect your interactions with clients and colleagues

## SKILLS OF A CHW

ORGANIZED  
COMPASSIONATE  
FLEXIBLE  
NON-JUDGMENTAL  
GOOD LISTENER  
LIVED EXPERIENCE  
EMPATHETIC  
GOAL FOCUSED / ORIENTED  
PERSISTENT  
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES  
GOOD VERBAL & WRITTEN  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS  
PRACTICE SELF-CARE



## HIRING A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER



## EXPERIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

CHWs live in the communities that they serve, whether they're rural, urban, or somewhere in between. There is typically a larger need for CHWs in underprivileged, marginalized communities where resources and access to quality healthcare are limited. CHWs work to help educate and improve the health of their neighbors.

Here are some job duties that CHWs may take on:

- Discuss health concerns with members of the community
- Provide informal counseling and social support
- Help people understand their health conditions
- Translate or interpret health information for clients
- Provide referrals and education materials
- Advocate for individual and community health care needs
- Collect and report data findings to help improve the quality of care and social services within a community
- Participate in evaluation and research

## RECOMMENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell us about a challenge you have faced in your current or a past position, and what you did to resolve the challenge?
- What is your experience working with individuals in need of support or assistance, particularly related to \_\_\_\_\_ (population)?
- Tell us about a time when you had to navigate through a system in the community in order to help yourself or someone else.
- In this role, you work closely with clientele with high needs. How might you set boundaries with a client who may look to you to “solve all of their problems?”



## SUPPORTING A HUB COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

### SUPERVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Schedule and hold regular meetings with CHW to review cases. Minimum of bi-weekly meetings are recommended.
- Demonstrate understanding and support for CHW need for flexibility to complete work (i.e. outside office walls or standard work hours).
- Encourage a self-care plan be developed and implemented by CHWs.
- Have a clear understanding of the role and value of a CHW (see page 5).
- CHW supervisors must participate in CHW training, as outlined by Great Rivers HUB.

### CONNECTIONS & NETWORKING

- Great Rivers HUB Community of Practice (COP)
- Coulee Region Community Health Worker Network
- Wisconsin Statewide Community Health Worker Network ([www.wichwnetwork.com](http://www.wichwnetwork.com))
- National Community Health Worker Association (NACHW; [www.nachw.org](http://www.nachw.org))

### TRAINING & SUPPORT

In addition to a robust on-boarding, Great Rivers HUB works with CHWs to enhance their skills by connecting them to an established community of practice, providing shadowing opportunities, and offering professional development. The following are provided or supported by the HUB annually:

- Cultural humility
- Ethics & boundaries
- Motivational Interviewing
- Resilience & Trauma Informed Care
- Mental Health First Aid
- Self-care practices



## VALUE OF A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

The value of a Community Health Worker in terms of impact on health and cost savings has been well documented across the world. Below is research from organizations that have recognized the importance and value of Community Health Workers.

### [American Public Health Association](#)

*“A Community Health Worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy.”*

### [World Health Organization](#)

*“On May 22, 2019, the World Health Assembly recognized that Community Health Workers play an important role in delivering quality primary health care services as part of interdisciplinary teams.”*

### [American Diabetes Association](#)

*“CHWs can be part of a cost-effective, evidence-based strategy to improve the management of diabetes and cardiovascular risk factors in underserved communities and health care systems.”*

### [Center for Medicaid and Medicare; PDF: Health Care Innovation Awards \(HCIA\) Meta- Analysis and Evaluators Collaborative, Annual Report, Year 3](#)

*“Of six types of innovation components that we evaluated (i.e., used health IT, used Community Health Workers, medical home intervention, focus on behavioral health, used telemedicine, workflow/process redesign intervention), only innovations using Community Health Workers (CHWs) were found to lower total costs (by \$138 per beneficiary per quarter).”*

### [Pathways Community HUB Institute \(PCHI\)](#)

PCHI is the certifying body for all Pathway Community HUB models.

To learn more about the Pathways Community HUB model and review various research studies demonstrating the value of the HUB model and CHWs, please visit: [www.pchi-hub.com/resources](http://www.pchi-hub.com/resources).